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# Munger Africana Library Notes



EURO KAPPEL AT THE ST. GEORGE'S GALLERY, KNIGHTSBRIDGE.

A Zulu View of Victorian  
London

Bernth Lindfors

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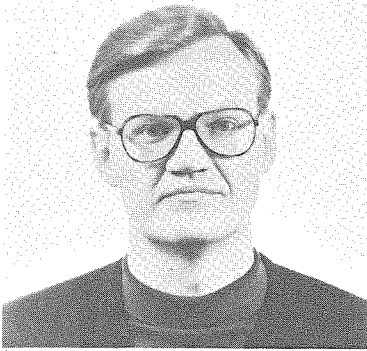
A Zulu View of Victorian London

Bernth Lindfors

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*Cover illustration: "Zulu Kaffirs at the St. George  
Gallery, Knightsbridge"  
from Illustrated London Times,  
May 28, 1853*

## PREFACE



Dr. Bernth Lindfors is Professor of English and African Literature at the University of Texas in Austin. This is one of the leading centers in the United States for African literature and is richly endowed with books and original manuscripts.

Professor Lindfors was born in Jörn, Sweden, in 1938. He received a B.A. from Oberlin College, an A.M.T. from Harvard, an M.A. from Northwestern, and a Ph.D. from UCLA.

He has had many academic honors, including the following Fellowships: NDEA Title VI, Foreign Areas, National Endowment for the Humanities (Younger Humanist), and Social Science Research Council/American Council of Learned Societies.

Lindfors is the author of Folklore in Nigerian Literature and has edited a number of books dealing with African oral and written literatures. He has been the editor of Research in African Literatures since its founding in 1970.

E.S.M.

## A ZULU VIEW OF VICTORIAN LONDON

Bernth Lindfors

In 1853 a group of thirteen Zulus -- eleven men, one woman, and a child -- was taken to London and other European cities to be exhibited to the Western world. Unlike other individuals and groups who were paraded passively before European audiences as biological curiosities and specimens of uncivilized humanity, the Zulus were a performing troupe who energetically acted out events said to be typical of "Kaffir" life. Their singing, dancing, and uninhibited acting made them a popular attraction on the London stage throughout the summer of 1853. They were so popular, in fact, that they were summoned to give a command performance at Buckingham Palace for Queen Victoria and her children. A sample of the enthusiastic British response to what must have been the first black South African musical group to tour Europe can be seen in a London Times review published two days after the show opened:

Although there have been several attempts to render Caffre life familiar to the English public through the medium of exhibitions, nothing in this way has been done so completely or on so large a scale as the new exhibition opened on Monday evening in the rooms formerly occupied by the Chinese Museum. Eleven Zulu men, with a woman and a child, are assembled into a company, and instead of performing one or two commonplace feats, may be said to go through the whole drama of Caffre life, while a series of scenes, painted by Mr. Charles Marshall, gives an air of reality to the living pictures. Now the Caffres are at their meal, feeding themselves with enormous spoons, and expressing their satisfaction by a wild chant, under the inspiration of which they bump themselves along without rising in a sort of circular dance. Now the witchfinder commences his operations to discover the culprit whose magic has brought sickness into the tribe, and becomes perfectly rabid through the effect of his own

incantations. Now there is a wedding ceremony, now a hunt, now a military expedition, all with characteristic dances; and the whole ends with a general conflict between rival tribes. The songs and dances are, as may be expected, monotonous in the extreme, and without the bill it would be difficult to distinguish the expression of love from the gesture of martial defiance. Nevertheless, as a picture of manners, nothing can be more complete; and not the least remarkable part of the exhibition is the perfect training of the wild artists. They seem utterly to lose all sense of their present position, and, inspired by the situations in which they are placed, appear to take Mr. Marshall's scenes for their actual abode in the vicinity of Port Natal. If 11 English actors could be found so completely to lose themselves in the characters they assumed, histrionic art would be in a state truly magnificent.<sup>1</sup>

Other London reviewers singled out many of the same features for comment -- the excellent scenery, the impressive physical appearance of the Zulus, the spirited acting. A columnist for The Athenaeum spoke of the "almost perfect dramatic effect with which these wild men play their parts,"<sup>2</sup> and a reviewer for The Spectator, equally impressed with the "considerable dramatic propriety" of the performances, praised the vigor of the acting:

The charm-song and the proceedings of the witchfinder or "smeller out" were especially expressive and forcible in their pantomime. As for the noises -- the howls, yells, hoots, and whoops, the snuffling, wheezing, bubbling, grovelling, and stamping -- they form a concert to whose savagery we cannot attempt to do justice.<sup>3</sup>

The Illustrated London News initially described the exhibition simply as a "picturesque drama [consisting of] a series of scenes which charm by their spirit and vraisemblance" and often excite laughter by depicting incidents "more amusing than anything in a farce," but in its next issue it printed a sketch of one of the scenes in the show, gave brief biographical details on several of the performers, and elaborated on what it had found particularly entertaining:

After a supper of meal, of which the Kaffirs partake with their large wooden spoons, an extraordinary song and dance are performed, in which each performer moves about on his haunches, grunting and snorting the while like a pair of asthmatic bellows . . . but no description can give an idea of the cries and shouts -- now comic, now terrible -- by which the Kaffirs express their emotions. The scene illustrative of the preliminaries of marriage and the bridal festivities might leave one in doubt which was the bridegroom, did not that interesting savage announce his enviable situation by

screams of ecstasy which convulse the audience. The Zulus must be naturally good actors; for a performance more natural and less acting is seldom if ever seen upon any stage.<sup>5</sup>

The "Zulu Kaffir Exhibition" was obviously good theater and deserved to become a huge box-office success.

On May 26th, after the show had been on for a week and a half and the first rave reviews had appeared, Charles Dickens went to see it and found the performance so amusing that he was inspired to write a humorous essay about the Zulus for Household Words, a popular weekly journal he had founded in 1850. He called the essay "The Noble Savage," the brunt of his argument being that such savages could not by any stretch of the imagination be considered noble at all. Here are a few extracts from his comic sketch:

Though extremely ugly, [the Zulus] are much better shaped than such of their predecessors as I have referred to; and they are rather picturesque to the eye, though far from odiferous to the nose. What a visitor left to his own interpretations and imaginings might suppose these noblemen to be about, when they give vent to that pantomimic expression which is quite settled to be the natural gift of the noble savage, I cannot possibly conceive; for it is so much too luminous for my personal civilisation that it conveys no idea to my mind beyond a general stamping, ramping, and raving, remarkable (as everything in savage life is) for its dire uniformity.

If [a Zulu] wants a wife he appears before the Kennel of the gentleman who he has selected for his father-in-law, attended by a party of male friends of a very strong flavor, who screech and whistle and stamp an offer of so many cows for the young lady's hand. The chosen father-in-law -- also supported by a high-flavored party of male friends -- screeches, whistles, and yells (being seated on the ground, he can't stamp) that there never was such a daughter in the market as his daughter, and that he must have six more cows. The son-in-law and his select circle of backers, screech, whistle, stamp, and yell in reply, that they will give three more cows. The father-in-law (an old deluder, overpaid at the beginning) accepts four, and rises to bind the bargain. The whole party, the young lady included, then falling into epileptic convulsions, and screeching, whistling, stamping, and yelling together -- and nobody taking any notice of the young lady (whose charms are not to be thought of without a shudder) -- the noble savage is considered married, and his friends make demoniacal leaps at him by way of congratulation. . .

The noble savage sets a king to reign over him, to whom he submits his life and limbs without a murmur or question, and whose whole life is passed chin deep in a lake of blood; but who, after killing incessantly, is in his turn killed by his relations and friends, the moment a gray hair appears on his head. All the noble savage's wars with his fellow-savages (and he takes no pleasure in anything else) are wars of extermination -- which is the best thing I know of him, and the most comfortable to my mind when I look at him. He has no moral feelings of any kind, sort, or description; and his "mission" may be summed up as simply diabolical. . . .

After more examples of this sort, Dickens concludes his argument by stating:

My position is, that if we have anything to learn from the Noble Savage, it is what to avoid. His virtues are a fable; his happiness is a delusion; his nobility, nonsense . . . and the world will be all the better when his place knows him no more.<sup>6</sup>

Although it sometimes appears so in this essay, Dickens was not really recommending genocide. He was very much the Victorian pragmatist striving to puncture an inflated Romantic conception of the dignity of so-called primitive peoples. The Zulus were simply a convenient case in point, a group so far removed from Europe in custom and culture that they could easily be held up as examples of a benighted race desperately in need of enlightenment. Dickens was not serious when he suggested that such peoples be exterminated; rather, he wanted them "civilised off the face of the earth."<sup>7</sup> He believed in cultural, not literal, genocide.

Yet it is interesting to note with what contempt Zulu customs, traditions, and institutions were viewed by the London audiences who saw this troupe perform. The performers obviously overstepped the boundaries of Victorian decorum when they sang and danced, but their antics presumably would not have provoked so much hilarity among spectators with cultural traditions more closely akin to those of the performers themselves. Underlying the reaction of Dickens and other English viewers was a broad streak of undisguised racism, a belief that the Zulus were morally and mentally inferior to Europeans. The numerous comments on their smell, their bizarre modes of dress (and undress), their noises, their monotonous songs, rabid incantations, and wild, demoniacal dances, betray an arrogant assumption that the Zulus were overgrown children of nature who had not yet developed the inhibitions, self-discipline and manners that distinguish more civilised folk. They were savages pure and simple, primitives in the raw.

Of course, one cannot really blame the Victorians for being so ethnocentric. Nineteenth-century Europe, with its numerous civil and international wars, was not exactly a showcase of ethnic tolerance, and inadequate opportunities for meaningful face-to-face



cultural contact with the non-Western world hindered Europeans from learning much about the human beings who inhabited the rest of the globe. There were no documentary films or television specials then to bring more accurate images of foreign peoples to the living rooms of London. The Zulus were therefore merely a spectacle, a carnival act consciously designed to play up their abnormalities -- i.e., their radical deviance from European norms of dress and behavior. It would be ethnocentric of us to expect audiences who saw them 125 years ago to react with more modern sensibility and to come away from such a performance with a richer understanding and appreciation of Zulu culture.

But when one reads such one-sided accounts as those quoted from the mass media of Victorian London, one naturally wonders how the Zulus themselves would have perceived and interpreted what they saw in Europe. How would the British have looked to them? Given their own cultural orientation, their own esthetic preferences and ethnocentric biases, how would Zulu visitors have regarded what they found in a city like London? Fortunately, an unusual document that has long been out of circulation provides a basis for answering some of these intriguing questions. Reprinted here is the text of a dialogue between one of the Zulu performers and a group of Zulu elders in Natal to whom he was reporting what he had seen abroad. The conversation was taken down by someone fluent in Zulu (presumably a missionary working in the area), and was published in English translation in one of the last numbers of the Natal Journal,<sup>8</sup> a missionary quarterly from Pietermaritzburg that survived for only two years before expiring for lack of adequate financial support. The entire document is reproduced here, including the editor's prefatory remarks and parenthetical interpolations.

## A SOUTH AFRICAN NATIVE'S PICTURE OF ENGLAND

[A few years ago certain natives of the colony of Natal were conveyed to England for purposes of exhibition. They remained in the British Islands, and in European countries, for about a year, travelling from place to place, and seeing a great deal. It so chanced that, subsequently to their return, one of the party, who had made good use of his eyes, was induced to tell of what he had seen, in the presence of several older men of his own race. The following sketch of the scene, and report of the experiences of the traveller, is made by an eye and ear witness, who was present at the time, and who was eminently qualified, by a thorough acquaintance with the native language and peculiarity of character, to preserve an accurate record of what passed. Every expression that is attributed to the narrator was actually used by the young native in communicating his experiences to his companions. The account of the conversation may accordingly be pursued by the readers of the Natal Journal with exceeding interest, as furnishing a trustworthy and vivid picture of the aspect civilized matters assume in semi-barbarous eyes. -- Ed. Natal Journal.]

Upon a certain occasion not many moons ago, an intelligent young Zulu, of about twenty-two years of age, sat on the floor of a large room in the city of Maritzburg, surrounded by twenty older men of the same race -- most of them persons of rank and influence in their tribes, and some of them old enough to be the young man's grandfather. The countenance of the young man was open and clear; but the faces of the elders were clouded with doubt, or fixed in the impassable mould of incredulity, which barbarians of experience and dignity so well know how to assume. The occasion of the gathering was that the young Othello had undertaken to speak of "the dangers he had passed," and to recount his adventures in strange lands. In place of "antres vast and deserts idle," he, however, had to tell of the wonders of civilization, things more incredible to the rude dwellers of the kraal, than if the narration had been of "men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders." He had crossed the wide ocean, and visited the white-chiefs in their island home beyond, and he had now to bear his testimony to their surprising cleverness and power. For some time the entire party sat in uninterrupted silence, the old men unwilling to admit curiosity, and eyeing their travelled entertainer. At last one of the seniors put an end to the probationary silence by saying --

"Well, young man, it is said you are older than we are; you have travelled further, and seen more; you have crossed the sea. Now tell us of your wanderings, and what you have seen; but do not pour lies upon us."

"Yes, father," replied the youth deferentially (for the reader must know that great respect is always shown by these people to age as well as rank), "I have crossed the sea; I have seen London, the great place of the English; I have also crossed another sea, and seen the 'great places' of other white nations; and there is another great sea, which I did not cross; and beyond that live still other white nations. I will tell you no lies; but what my own eyes have seen can I relate to you."

The old councillor said, "Go on, my son, begin with the sea."

The young traveller proceeded to say, "I must first tell you that when we left this country to go to England, we had heard from Englishmen much about the greatness of the English -- how numerous they were; what an old people, and how rich they were; and what wonderful things they possessed. We shall now see the truth of all this -- every man magnifies his own country to strangers. When they told us, they did not think we should go there to see for ourselves. We did see, and that which we saw far exceeded what we thought was exaggeration. I cannot tell you all I saw. I should not expect you to believe me if I did, because I saw before I could believe. When we left this country, the tax (native hut-tax) had only just been established; and when we asked why we had to pay? we were told that in every country people paid taxes. We did not believe this either; we thought that when another's property is wanted, a hole can always be found in the fence. We determined to investigate for ourselves, and bring back the truth. We did so; we enquired all over England, in France, in Germany, in Prussia; wherever we went all said they paid taxes, and that every one they knew paid taxes; so we concluded that where the world ends, there ends taxation! These are the two things we agreed together to enquire into and find out, and we found as I have told you."

"Going on the sea was hard to us; but we said, we will try; others have gone, and gone safely; should we be selected for a different fate because we are black? At first the ship went well enough; soon it began to lean from side to side, and it felt so loose in the water, we said it will fall over; we saw no reason why it should remain upright; presently we became very sick, and could eat nothing, and we thought we should die; our hearts turned behind us, and we lamented for our friends; at length, however, we found ourselves recovering, and the ship still keeping its right position, and we said all may yet go well with us. We reached Cape Town. Until we had seen England, we thought Cape Town was a great place, but then we saw otherwise. After leaving the Cape, we lost sight of the land, and we thought, how can the ship find its way without a path -- before, behind, and on every side, is nothing but sea? we bewailed our condition, and said we shall all die in this waste together; but the white men laughed at us, and told us that they saw their way in the sky -- that the stars were their guides, and the sun their path, and that they had not lost the way; we hoped this might be true, but we could not see such a path, and we could not believe; we said, however, surely these people do

not die joking, for if we die, they must also. After some time the captain said we should see land the next day, and this would prove that he knew where he was; we said, we shall see; the next day truly we did see land; then our fears ceased, and our bodies melted into comfort; this land, however, was not England, but some island in the sea which we were to pass by. In the third month of being in the ship we saw England; then we were told that we were in the mouth of a river, and soon after, that London was before us; those who knew London saw it; our eyes, however saw nothing but a cloud of smoke, then houses, and presently poles standing out of the water, like reeds in a marsh, and these were the masts of the London ships; we went in among them, and our ship stood still -- and we found ourselves in London, the great place of the English!"

One of the listeners enquired how large this great place was? the young man replied, "We never saw the end of it; we tried hard to find it, but could not; we ascended a very high building like a pole (the monument), to see where it ended; but our sight was filled with houses, and streets, and people; we heard that many people, born and grown old there, had never seen the end of it, and we said, if such is the case, why should we, who are strangers, look for it? we gave it up.

"The people are so numerous that they tread one on another; all day and all night the streets are crowded; we thought some great thing had happened, and said, let us wait till the people have passed on, but they never did pass; if any one falls down he is trodden upon and dies, there is no rising again for him, unless his own strength helps him; the surface of the earth is too small for the people, and some live under the earth, even under the water" (an allusion to the shops in the Thames tunnel).

"That must be a lie, young man," exclaimed one of his listeners.

"I hate a liar," said another.

"Perhaps it may be true," suggested a third, "let him explain."

"No, chiefs! it is no lie," replied the young man, "for I saw it with my own eyes; the London river is as broad as one part of the Bay of Natal; over it they have built a bridge which people and wagons can cross upon; there are also boats by which you can get over on the water: and under the river is a passage cut, through which wagons and people can go to the other side, without knowing that they have passed a river at all, for the water is above them; and it was here that I saw the people living."

One of the chiefs enquired, "If wagons and people can pass on a bridge over the water, and they can cross with boats on the water, why should they make another passage under the water?"

The young man said, "I asked as you ask, and was told they made it so because they wished to have it so."

Chief, "But where is their light -- it must be dark where they live?"

Young man, "Fire gives light."

Chief, "Did you go among the crowd in London?"

Young man, "Only while holding the arm of a white man, for people lose themselves in London, and are sometimes never heard of; we were told that two brothers got separated in the streets, and it took a letter from one, two months to find the other, and he was in London all the while; you know how fast letters always travel."

Chief, "Young man, if you speak the truth you are old, for you have seen much; we are but children."

Young man, "Besides the crowds in the streets on land, the water is covered with large and small ships, all full of people, going up and down it, who never go into the large sea, and I was told they live on the water because there is no room for them on the land; when I saw all these people, I thanked for you that England was not joined on to this place, for if it were they would trample you into the earth with their boots."

Chief, "Did you see any black people in England?"

Young man, "I saw a few, but although they had black faces they had long hair, and I heard that they came over another sea."

Chief, "Are the houses of London large?"

Young man, "They are so tall that they shade the streets from the sun till midday; the spirits of the place live in the highest parts of some of the buildings, where men never go, and day and night utter a wailing sound, which I heard" (this is probably an allusion to the chimes in the churches).

Chief, "What kind of country is England? what grass grows there?"

Young man, "I never saw any country, and there is no room for the grass to grow -- except it is fenced in like a field of corn it would all be trodden down; I went from London to other parts of England, but I only saw houses and fences; I never saw open country, and believe there is none any where more open than this Umgungundhlovi (the town of Pietermaritzburg); a man is never alone in England, he could not be so where I was, but I travelled so fast my eyes were puzzled."

Chief, "How?"

Young man, "I travelled in a wagon drawn by another wagon, but I never could understand; what I know is, that it went so fast, that if you were to start from this place at daylight in the summer time, to go to Durban (fifty miles off) you could go there and be back again by gun-fire the same morning" (this would be from half-past four to nine a.m.)

"No! no!" exclaimed his hearers, "that is faster than a horse can go!"

Young man, "A horse! when you want to go quickly in this country you ride on a horse, but there you take the horse with you into the wagon, and he feeds as he travels."

Chief, "That is too much for us; you are laughing at us. What is it you say?"

Young man, "One wagon draws a great many others; it goes so fast that a horse cannot keep up, therefore you take your horse with you; when you have arrived at the place you are going to, you mount him, and ride about to finish your business quickly, in time for the return of the wagon; having done this, you put him back again into the wagon to be taken home with you."

Chief, "And what is this wagon that draws the other wagons along?"

Young man, "I do not understand it myself; I could only make out what is a large kettle on wheels, full of water, with a fire under it to make it boil; but before it boils other loaded wagons are tied behind it, for the moment it does boil it runs away on its own road; and if it were to boil without the wagons being fastened to it, I do not know where it would go to."

Chief, "But does going so fast not break the wagons?"

Young man, "It has its own roads, upon which nothing else travels; they are straight and level; valleys are built up, and hills bored through for it, and strips of iron are put into the ground to keep it right."

Chief, "Did you ever see a hill bored through?"

Young man, "I passed through many; a stranger thinks his road goes over the hill, but all at once he finds himself going through it, in darkness, and sparks, and a fearful noise."

Chief, "If there are so many people in England as you say, do not these wagons kill the people?"

Young man, "These roads are guarded, and the people take care of themselves, few prefer death."

Chief, "Are there any cattle in England?"

Young man, "There are none here; I never saw a cow give milk, or a fat ox, till I went to England."

Chief, "But you say there is no open country; where do they graze?"

Young man, "They are kept in stables like horses, and their food is cultivated."

Chief, "Is there any beef in London?"

Young man, "It was in London that I saw beef."

Chief, "Where did it come from?"

Young man, "I enquired about that very point, for I could see but few oxen, and still there was plenty of beef; and I found that they were brought from a distance in wagons, feeding all the time; for instance the oxen to be slaughtered here tomorrow -- supposing this to be London -- are just now leaving Dalagoa Bay, in those wagons drawn by the hot-water wagon; in England oxen do not draw wagons, but ride in them, and I saw a herd of them coming into London on the tops of the houses; there was no room for the road on the earth, so they built it over the houses."

Chief, "When you began, young man, we asked you not to pour lies upon us; we are no longer children, we are full grown men; how can a road be built over houses such as these we see?"

Young man, "I tell you what I saw, I add nothing of my own; I saw oxen come over the houses of London, and they are not like these; I see no houses here; in England the horses live in better houses than the gentlemen do here."

Chief, "You said the cows give plenty of milk in England."

Young man, "One there gives as much as a kraal full would here; the milker tires before the milk is finished."

Chief, "What kind are they?"

Young man, "The kind we call Amafalalani; they have large bodies and short legs; they stay in houses; when I looked at them I was sorry for them, for although they gave so much milk they never felt the sun."

Chief, "How much is the money that buys them?"

Young man, "Many pounds are paid for one cow; but London is the place where money is made, they don't look at it there."

Chief, "Are the people of London all rich?"

Young man, "Many are rich and many are poor; in such a great place there is all that is beautiful, and all that is bad."

Chief, "How is a rich man known in England?"

Young man, "He is not rich who has not been obliged to build a house to keep his money in; I saw many large houses in London, built for nothing but to keep money in."

Chief, "Did the English notice you black people much?"

Young man, "They noticed us because we are black, for I saw they never noticed each other."

Chief, "Did you hear any news of the country while you were there?"

Young man, "Yes, the English were at war with the AmaRusi (Russians); we saw the soldiers going into the ships to fight them."

Chief, "Where was the fighting carried on?"

Young man, "It was over the sea; I heard that the English never allow any fighting in their own land; whenever they fight they go and meet the enemy in his country."

Chief, "They understand fighting who do that; but did they show any alarm as to who would be beaten?"

Young man, "None at all -- they know they will beat; I saw some of the ships of the AmaRusi brought in which had been captured by the English; it is only the soldiers who go to fight, war makes no difference to the people."

Chief, "Did you see the Queen?"

Young man, "Yes, we were taken to her house -- it is very large, looks to have been built long ago; is surrounded by high walls, and guarded by soldiers; we were taken into a large room, in which it was said the Queen saw people who came from other countries; many persons, all belonging to the inside, came to look at us, and we stood wondering at what we saw; presently we perceived from all the gazers leaving us, that the Queen was coming -- we thought these were many of them great men, but they knew themselves to be too small to stand in her presence -- all left us but our conductors, and we feared to stay where our superiors had considered themselves unworthy to remain; the Queen however approached, and we saluted her with our 'Bayete' (native royal salute); one of our conductors was then called to explain to her all about us; I was also called to answer questions about this country -- Chaka, Panda, the Zulus, and Faku -- I was asked about old Zulus, who had died long ago, and whose names I only recollected after my return to this country, for I had heard my father talk of them. When we found ourselves so near the Queen, we felt that we were



not far from the edge of a precipice; but when she spoke our fears ceased, for we saw she only wanted to look at us; but who can tell all that we saw there -- they showed us the Queen's carriage, fastened and covered with gold, the dresses of the men who sit in front and behind it the same, as also the dresses of the horses who draw it" --

An acquisitive old listener remarked, "It might be profitable to walk behind it; it is said that riches are often found in the paths of the great."

The young man resumed, "We were shown the stables where the horses were kept; those belonging to the Queen's guard are all black, very beautiful; then we looked at the buildings themselves, but came away without knowing where the Queen herself staid [sic], the place is so large no one can know unless he is told.

Chief, "What kind of person is the Queen?"

Young man, "Not tall, but good looking; she is like any other English lady in her own house; it is only when she goes out that you see she is the mistress of the land; she rides in this shining carriage, surrounded by great gentlemen on horseback, and the soldier guards, with metal covers to their heads, riding their black horses; when there is no path for any one else, a way is always found for her; when she passes all hats are taken off, even the great of the land do not omit to uncover their heads, for she is passing who owns them all; it is then that even a stranger, who knows not, would say, this must be the Queen of the land."

Chief, "Did the Queen give you anything?"

Young man, "No, we were told that we must go again before we left, but we never did."

Chief, "You said you went over another sea, and saw other white nations."

Young man, "Yes, we crossed the sea, and saw the AmaFulansi (French) and the AmaBelgi, the AmaGermani and the AmaPulusi (Prussians); we saw all their 'great places.'"

Chief, "Are they like London?"

Young man, "Their houses are; but in size they are all children to London; we could walk from the middle of either of them to the outside in any direction, and return the same day; but London we never saw where it ended, or where it began, although we were bent upon doing so."

Chief, "Which are the largest of these great places?"

Young man, "Paris is large, and so is Berlin; I said Paris was the largest, but if a man contradicted me I should think he has seen as well as I, and might be right; but London is the

mother, and could hold one in each arm."

Chief, "Are the people there as rich as those in London?"

Young man, "They themselves confessed to us that the greatest riches were in England."

Chief, "Did you recross the sea, and go back again to England?"

Young man, "Yes, but one of our party died in Berlin."

Chief, "What more did you see in England?"

Young man, "I saw more than I can tell you, and yet I saw nothing; some of our party staid behind because they said they wished to see more; I saw men ascend into the skies, and go higher than the eagle; I saw dogs carry letters, and monkeys firing off guns; I saw a horse dance to a drum, and when he had finished make a bow to the people who were looking at him; I saw elephants, seacows, tigers, and crocodiles, living in houses; I saw snakes handled by human hands; I saw a boa coil himself round an Englishman, put his head into the man's mouth, and then uncoil himself when he told him; I saw men standing on their heads and walking on their hands for money, and paid my own money to see him do it."

Exclamations of "Hau! hau!" followed the narration of this string of wonders. "By Chaka!" said one of his hearers, "the young man is inventing now; where did the men get wings who went into the skies?"

Young man, "I saw all that I tell you; the men did not go up with wings, but in a basket (a subdued "Au!" from several showed that they thought the young man was becoming incorrigible) -- the basket was tied to a large round bag filled with smoke; it looked like a large calabash, with the mouth downwards, and the basket hung beneath; in this two people sat, and when the bag was let go it went up with them. I looked at it till my eyes were tired, and it became smaller than a bird; they took up sand with them, and poured it on the people beneath, some of it fell on me."

Chief, "Did you see them come down again?"

Young man, "No, I did not; but people said the coming down was dangerous, because the thing mostly went where it liked, not where the people in it wanted; sometimes they found themselves on the top of a tree, or a house, or in the water."

Chief, "What did they go up for?"

Young man, "I don't know; they told me there was some work they went up to do, but what it was I did not hear."

Chief, "It is hard to believe this, but if it is true the white people have large livers" (much daring).

Young man, "If you were to go where I have been you would say so."

Chief, "Do you speak the firm truth in what you say about the wild animals and snakes?"

Young man, "Yes, I saw all I tell you; I saw animals from this country, and others which I had never seen before."

Chief, "May we believe you?"

Young man, "You may, for it is all true; why should I tell you lies in praise of others? did you not hear me say, that when we went to England we thought all we had heard from the English was exaggerated, and when we saw for ourselves we said we had heard nothing?"

Chief, "We have heard, and if you have any more to tell us that is true, go on."

Young man, "I saw many things that were good to me, and many that I did not like. When a man dies in the streets (and many do, because the streets are always full), if he has no brother or friend he is taken to a house, and his things hung up, and he is cut open and salted, and papers put out to ask who he is; and if no one claims him he is taken to the doctoring houses, and cut up and dried; and if one dies, and they do not know his disease, they cut him open and look at him. We were taken to one of these doctoring houses, and when we were at the door we saw dead men standing up as if they were alive, so we feared to go in."

Chief, "Why is all this done?"

Young man, "Because they say the doctors learn to cure the sick, and because they don't want to bury more than they can help, for the ground is but small; in England people make ready places for burying themselves in, as we here make kraals for our cattle, and in these one generation is buried by the side of another."

Chief, "No wonder they come to Natal, if their own country has grown so small for them; but this cutting up dead people looks as if they knew how to 'takata' (use witchcraft)."

Young man, "They may know that also, for they know everything; but I heard that the doctors were the people who liked dead men, and that if the graves were not taken care of their people stole the bodies for them; we were also told that the man of our party who died at Berlin was only buried because we were there, and that he was afterwards taken out and cut up, to see if he was made inside like the white people."

Chief, "Where there are so many people there should be much food; but if land is so small, food must be scarce."

Young man, "The people are like the grass, but food is more abundant; at first we thought, where shall we get food when there are so many people of the country to eat it themselves -- we did not see it growing, or where it could grow, but we learnt afterwards that money brought the food of other countries there; for a sixpence a man can fill himself there much better than here, and have more than he can eat."

Chief, "Is there umbila (Indian corn) in England?"

Young man, "Plenty, but we never looked at it; we eat [sic] bread and drank beer; we only liked umbila after we came back to this country."

Chief, "Have you any more things to tell of?"

Young man, "I have many more, but I cannot recollect them now; I did not see what I wished to see, the houses where clothes and iron things were made; we were always promised to see them, but did not; some of our party refused to come back, because they wished to see these and other wonders; I saw, however, where they are made, and the people that make them, and found that our belief was not true, that a race of people with only one eye were the only makers of them. We went to the house where the money is made, but the soldier would not let us go in -- he said that not even an Englishman was allowed inside -- but we heard them making money very fast from where we were; there is English money distinct, and French money distinct; all countries have their own money; and when an Englishman goes to France he buys French money from the money houses, where I saw heaps for sale, to use in France, and the same when a Frenchman comes to England."

"But although I have told you so much I have told you nothing, for I was only beginning myself to see when I left; I saw but one thing -- the number and power of the English, and all the white people; when I went from this country, I thought that the blacks were beyond the whites in number, but when I saw for myself I concluded there were no black people at all; men say many things, and that the whites are but few -- it is only because they have not yet come; if they were all here they would dig down the mountains and build up the valleys, and we should be like dogs on a flat, howling for their homes; we know no work -- they can work for themselves -- there is nothing they cannot do; and we! what can we do? I often thought of you in England, and that you knew not the truth on this point; that you believed you were strong, while you were nothing; and that it would put an end to many false thoughts if every chief in Natal could be taken to see England."

Chief, "Young man, we thank you for your news; you have made us older than we were, but you are older still, for you have seen with your eyes what we only hear with our ears; as you say, eyes

are more to be relied on than ears, and it would be well to see as well as hear; but what old man would cross the sea?"

#### NOTES

1. London Times, 18 May 1853, p. 8.
2. The Athenaeum, 28 May 1853, p. 650.
3. The Spectator, 21 May 1853, p. 485.
4. The Illustrated London News, 21 May 1853, p. 399.
5. The Illustrated London News, 28 May 1853, p. 409.
6. "The Noble Savage," Household Words, 11 June 1853, pp. 337-39.
7. Ibid., p. 337.
8. Natal Journal, Vol. 2, No. 7, July 1858, pp. 126-38.

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